

Temporary Housing for Hurricane Katrina Evacuees Includes Cruise Ships, FEMA Reports

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Federal Emergency Management Agency is "pulling out the stops" on identifying available housing solutions for hurricane evacuees, said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response and head of FEMA.

"FEMA is handling the Herculean task of coordinating the relocation of many thousands of individuals and families whose lives have been torn apart by Hurricane Katrina," Brown said. "Every available alternative, including creative options for immediate housing, is on the table."

Brown said the housing mission is being aided from a wide variety of sources across the nation including state parks, military bases, available housing stock and private homes. "The response has been overwhelming and we're working to place people in safe shelter as quickly as possible," he said.

He reported today that cruise ships -- with lodging for about 8,000 persons -- are one of several options which will provide temporary housing and comfort for those whose have been disrupted by Hurricane Katrina. Two ships, with a capacity of about 2,600 passengers each, will be based in Galveston, Texas, tomorrow and begin boarding evacuees Tuesday. Evacuees are chosen by state and local authorities with priority given to the elderly and other people with special needs. No one should self-report to any ships, but work with local emergency officials if shelter is needed.

A third ship is scheduled to arrive in Mobile, Ala. on Thursday, Sept. 8, to begin lodging about 1,800 displaced persons. Details about a fourth ship that will hold 1,000 occupants will be provided soon. Currently, it is preparing to move from Charleston, S.C., to head for the Gulf Coast. FEMA tasked the U.S. Military Sealift Command to charter four cruise ships. Contracts were awarded for three ships from Carnival Cruise Lines and one from Scotia Prince Lines. All four ships are under charter for six months.

Other housing options being already being implemented or considered include:

- deployment of thousands of FEMA emergency trailers homes;
- use of military facilities;
- contracting for hotels and motels;
- contracting rentals and other vacant properties;
- assistance from state and local governments and businesses;
- generosity of friends, loved ones and other private citizens opening their homes to evacuees.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the

National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.